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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000165

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, DRL, INR

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [NI](#) [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: DECEPTION AND DEFECTION IN NIGERIA'S SOUTHERN PARTY POLITICS

REF: A. 04 LAGOS 2513

[B](#). 04 LAGOS 2592

[C](#). ABUJA 48

Classified By: Acting Consul General Ronald Kramer per 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: Recent developments in the southern political landscape highlight internal power struggles and the weakening of political parties. Succession battles scar the dominant People's Democratic Party (PDP) and factions within the PDP in both Edo state and Anambra state are unwilling to compromise. The largely southwestern opposition party, the Alliance for Democracy (AD), is at risk of losing Lagos, the last state in its control. Public confidence has eroded in the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) over its failures in Anambra State to uphold the democratic process. A sense of public uncertainty underscores political preparations for the 2007 elections. End Summary.

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PDP Power Struggle in Edo State  
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[1](#)2. (U) The battle over who becomes the next governor of Edo state has split the Edo State chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party into two contending factions. The battle pitches Governor Lucky Igbinedion and his father, Gabriel Igbinedion, a PDP chieftain, against PDP's Board of Trustees Chairman Tony Anenih and former military governor Samuel Ogbemudia. Anenih and Ogbemudia want the next governor of the state to come from their zone, the Edo central senatorial district, since the other two zones in the state produced the present governor and his deputy. Governor Igbinedion and his supporters insist that the contest should be open to all zones in the state.

[1](#)3. (C) Anenih and Ogbemudia are staunch Obasanjo loyalists while Governor Igbinedion, like most PDP Governors, is a close associate of Vice President Atiku. The Edo crisis is widely regarded as yet another source of friction between the Obasanjo and Atiku camps. An Edo state government official told Poloff that the national polarization of factions within the PDP is further complicating matters at the state level. Both factions have vested interests in who becomes the next governor. Anenih is supporting three of his close loyalists in the hope that one of them will eventually succeed. Governor Igbinedion wants either Mike Oghiadomhe, his deputy, or Osagie Ise-Iyamu, one of his senior advisors, to succeed him.

[1](#)4. (U) Unwilling to compromise, the two factions are engaged in a running battle that has further split the party. In early December, the Anenih faction established a parallel party secretariat and selected a parallel party executive. The official party secretariat is located on Governor Igbinedion's private property. The Anenih camp said it no longer felt comfortable with the location where its loyalists have been kidnapped and subject to violent attacks. In mid-December, the governor's faction responded by suspending Anenih, Ogbemudia, and many of their supporters from the party. Governor Igbinedion also replaced all known Anenih loyalists holding positions in his government. Shortly thereafter, the PDP national headquarters overruled the suspension and Anenih and his supporters regained their membership status.

[1](#)5. (U) In late December, President Obasanjo invited the principal actors in the Edo State dispute to Abuja for a peace meeting. Obasanjo then directed all the feuding factions to meet on December 27 to further consolidate the peace initiative. This meeting never took place. President Obasanjo again held separate meetings with leaders of the two factions in early January. Both factions agreed to reconcile, however there has been no visible progress.

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INEC Fails in Anambra  
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[1](#)6. (U) The senate has finally sworn in Chief Ben Obi as representative of the Anambra central senatorial district - a seat he won almost two years ago. After senate testimony on February 2 by the chairman of the Independent National

Electoral Commission (INEC) that confirmed Obi as the "duly elected senator", Obi was sworn in. It marked the end of Obi's legal battle against INEC and Ikechukwu Abana, who has occupied the seat since 2003. INEC's failures in Obi's case raised serious questions about its independence and its ability to conduct free and fair elections. (Bio Note: Chief Ben Obi is a former advisor to President Obasanjo on national security and the former National Secretary of the All Nigeria People's Party).

17. (U) INEC initially announced Obi the winner of the April 12, 2003 Anambra senate election. Shortly thereafter, INEC annulled the election and declared that Abana would be the next senate representative. Abana had lost the election for governor and had never been nominated in the senate electoral process. The Electoral Act does not give INEC the power to annul an election. In the annulment and substitution of the elected winner, the INEC commissioner in Anambra state reportedly explained that they were merely acting on "directives from above".

18. (C) In a meeting with Poloff, Obi said that this fiasco was "another June 12", alluding to the elections of 1993 that were annulled by former head of state Babengida. Obi used the court system to protest the INEC decision. Since the legal battle began, there have been 32 rulings and nine judgments, including from the Supreme Court, all in Obi's favor. Obi confirmed that in January, he finally received the Sealed Certificate of Return from INEC, showing him as the rightful winner of the election. (Comment: The erosion of public confidence in INEC must be addressed for it to have the legitimacy it needs to conduct the 2007 elections. End Comment).

19. (U) In another development in the ongoing feud between Anambra Governor Chris Ngige and Chris Uba (Reftel A), the Anambra state committee investigating the crisis firmly rejected Uba's plea to be named deputy governor. A report from the committee stated that this would only "aggravate the situation".

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Strife Within the Alliance for Democracy  
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10. (U) The future is uncertain for the Alliance for Democracy (AD) party in Lagos State. (Note: Lagos is the only one of seventeen southern states that is not controlled by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), though in many states the PDP is believed to have gained power fraudulently). Four AD federal legislators from Lagos have recently defected to the rival PDP party. The list includes Senator Musiliu Obanikoro, a close confidant of Lagos State Governor Ahmed Tinubu, and three other members of the House of Representatives. Obanikoro is a prominent Senator from the Lagos Island district and was considered by some as Tinubu's likely successor. His defection to the PDP has severely weakened the AD hold on Lagos State and might boost PDP chances to win the next governorship election in Lagos State. Obanikoro has already announced that he will seek the PDP gubernatorial ticket in the 2007 election (Reftel B).

11. (U) In its effort to halt the PDP assault, the Lagos AD has instituted a legal battle and initiated a recall process to regain the seats it lost to these defecting legislators. The party has filed four separate suits in a federal court to challenge the constitutionality of the legislators' action and reclaim its seats in the national assembly. The legislators were all elected on an AD ticket. The AD argues that in accordance with the constitution, when they changed parties, the legislators forfeited their seats.

12. (C) Comment: With these defections, the AD risks losing Lagos, the last state that it controls, in the 2007 elections. (Note: The party lost five states to the PDP in the 2003 elections and the PDP already controls 28 of Nigeria's 36 states). If the PDP had its internal conflicts under control, it could capitalize on the succession battles in the opposition parties. However, fractures within the PDP, as evidenced in Anambra state, Edo state, and the forced resignation of PDP Chairman Ogbah (Reftels), might further divide the party. With party positioning for 2007 making daily headline news, the alignment of key individuals and power networks is far from determined. End Comment.  
KRAMER